

Marquette Charter Township Supports
Peter White Public Library Services
By
Dennis R. Liimatta, Township Supervisor

I would like to respond to a recent misrepresentation of fact media campaign by the Peter White Public Library leadership that has caused a totally unnecessary negative ripple throughout the community. We have no understanding of why the PWPL leadership chose this course to create public pressure; but their representation of Township Board action was not accurate. Let me be clear; there has been absolutely no discussion by this board regarding non-participation with PWPL at any time.

The Township Board is concerned with this broad publication of misinformation because it is false information; and is harmful to the reputation of the elected Township Board members, and their appointees to the PWPL Advisory Board. The fact is that Marquette Charter Township has a long history of being a very large financial supporter of the library - \$191,527.00 for 2012 alone. That is quite exceptional for a community of only 3,905 residents. Every property owner and business within Marquette Charter Township contributes extra tax millage beyond the base property tax millage (.9061 mil for 2011) that is distributed to the PWPL to support library services available to Township residents.

For the record, at their March 20th regular meeting the Marquette Township Board received the library millage request for 1.0 mil to be levied for five years; engaged in brief discussion with Library Director Pamela Christenson; and moved for the millage request to be placed on a future meeting agenda for full discussion and consideration – which is the Board normal practice for such requests. The Board was not prepared to approve ballot language at that meeting, and in fact, only had the agenda item because we received a notice the week before from PWPL stating they were coming to our meeting to present a request for millage renewal. Ballot request language for the August primary election is not due to be submitted until May 15th; and for the November general election is not due to be submitted until August 14th. The determination regarding which election ballot that the PWPL millage question will appear on rests with the Township Board, and again we informed Director Christenson that “we would take action” before the deadline. The claim made by PWPL that the Board is considering developing an alternative library in the Township Facility building has no basis in fact, and has never been discussed at any level, so I can’t even develop a response to this allegation.

The recent mailing by PWPL Board of Trustee’s President Dianne Patrick attributes a quote by me as stating at the March 20th Board meeting that Marquette Township is exploring “other alternatives” for library services as reported by Director Christenson. This is absolutely false, and they knew it was false before the mailing went out, which should give everyone pause as to why our library leadership would knowingly start and continue a smear campaign against this board. You heard me correctly, **OUR**

LIBRARY, as we as township residents and library card holders and patrons, consider PWPL our library, too.

The facts here are easily verifiable, as all one needs to do is watch the recorded meeting of March 20th, as I encouraged Director Christenson to do after speaking to her at length after the meeting, but to my knowledge she has declined our offer for a copy of the meeting. The facts speak for themselves, Marquette Township has a long history of support for PWPL, Director Christenson was told by this board we would continue to support PWPL, and that we “would place the renewal on a future agenda to which she would be notified”, at which time “we would look at all our provided information and explore all our options” for millage renewal. Director Christenson was informed that the Board were “huge supporters of PWPL and will continue to be so.” I then asked Clerk Ritari for the dates that the ballot language needed to be approved by, and after he gave the information to the board, I assured Director Christenson that “we intend to take action before that date.” Again, this information is available by watching the township board meeting of March 20th.

This Township Board takes great offense at the deliberate dissemination of false and misleading information by the PWPL leadership. When we are presented a last minute request to appear on our agenda, and we grant that request, we would be remiss in our duties if we did not move to continue the discussion at a later date, after all, the request for a continuation of a 5 year millage equates to a \$1.2 million investment of township taxpayers money based on our recent history of growth. We do not have to place this item on the August ballot as presented by PWPL, in fact, the November ballot would allow more residents to weigh in on the millage question because of the typically higher voter turnout associated with a contested presidential election. Unfortunately, misinformation dissemination has become a very common practice; and local elected and appointed officials are often the target. In my tenure as Township Supervisor, I can honestly say that this experience has been the most disappointing event I have witnessed.

We hope that this serves to dispel the false information spread throughout the community, and that when the millage renewal discussion appears on the agenda, that those of you with an interest in this issue attend and participate in the meeting.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Charter Township of Marquette, thank you for allowing us to set the record straight.